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SIPDIS

USAID FOR E&E (MEFFORD, STUDZINSKI)
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SUBJECT: GOG COMMITS TO PROVIDE \$600,000 TO
ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAM IN ALBANIA, EXPRESSES WISH FOR
CLOSER ASSISTANCE COOPERATION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES RIES FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

1. (SBU) Summary. During his December 5 visit to Athens, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia Thomas Mefford obtained the GoG's commitment to provide \$600,000 in funding for a multilateral anti-trafficking program in Albania. This was the culmination of almost two years of discussions between the GoG and USAID, led primarily by Deputy FonMin Evripidis Stylianides on the Greek side. Mefford held additional meetings with Hellenic Aid (HA) and with local NGOs focused on TIP. He was joined on his visit by USAID Country Director for Albania Harry Birnholz and USAID Mission Albania's Anti-Trafficking Specialist, Arian Giantris. End Summary.

DEPUTY FONMIN STYLIANIDES COMMITS \$600,000
TO ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN ALBANIA

2. (C) In his meeting with Mefford, Stylianides stressed the importance he ascribed to increased assistance cooperation with the USG: "We want to work with you, now and in the future." He noted his first priority was fighting trafficking in persons, and that the GoG was looking forward to progress on the child repatriation agreement with the Albanian Government (Note: currently in final review status with the GoA). He further noted the GoG had signed on Friday, November 29 a MOU with 12 Greek NGOs and International Organization for Migration (IOM) outlining how the GoG would cooperate with them on fighting TIP (septel).

3. (SBU) Stylianides immediately accepted Mefford's proposal for GoG participation in the next phase of the Transnational Action against Child Trafficking (TACT) project in Albania. Greece's participation in the project, which is currently funded by USAID (\$1.5 million), Sida of Sweden, UNICEF, the Oak Foundation, the National Albanian American Council (NAAC) and the Terre des Hommes Foundation of Switzerland, will total \$600,000 over a period of three years. Stylianides promised to send a letter to Ambassador Ries confirming the GoG's funding commitment. Birnholz, who noted that the Greek NGO ARSIS (Association for the Social Support of Youth, Hellas) already participated in the current phase of TACT, said he would work out the details of official GoG participation after returning to Tirana. At a dinner hosted by the Ambassador Ries later the same day, Stylianides stressed his hope that Greek participation in TACT could serve as a template for even broader USAID-HA regional TIP cooperation. Stylianides also asked Mefford to consider providing a training opportunity for a HA staffer at the USAID mission in Albania. Mefford and Birnholz warmly accepted the idea and said they would follow up.

GoG Ideas for Other Cooperation with USAID

4. (SBU) Stylianides and his staff outlined other areas of potential cooperation with USAID, including in the Balkans, Georgia, Egypt, and Africa:

A. Egypt. Stylianides' political advisor George Pandremenos outlined three projects in Egypt:
-- A \$2.5 million project to renovate "Residence Antoniadis" located near the Alexandria library which could house associated exhibitions and serve as administrative or dormitory space for scholars visiting the library. Pandremenos noted that the library has already committed \$500,000 to the project, and the World Bank is willing to provide up to \$1 million provided it can find matching funds.

-- The renovation of the St. George Monastery in Cairo. USAID has already completed a feasibility study of the renovation, and HA is willing to co-finance project implementation;

-- Construction of a school in the old Greek quarter of Cairo. Stylianides emphasized this project could only take place once the residences of the quarter had been renovated, a project that has only just gotten started.

1B. Georgia. Stylianides' Chef de Cabinet, Dimitris Platis, said the GoG hoped to cooperate with USAID on a "rule-of-law" project in Georgia focused on combating attacks against Greek property in Tbilisi. He noted that many Greeks had fled the capital as a result of violence there; local "Mafiosi" had murdered 17 Greek-origin Georgians and occupied many homes of Greek-origin Georgians. It was the GoG's hope that, with improved training, Georgian law enforcement could better combat these crimes. Mefford noted that the GoG's objectives for Georgia appeared to mesh well with those of USAID, and he agreed with Stylianides to promote a meeting between the U.S. and Greek ambassadors to Georgia to discuss the ideas.

1C. Darfur. Hellenic Aid's Emergency Humanitarian Director Nike Koutrakos said that HA's annual call for proposals was about to get off the ground and would have Darfur as a priority area. The goal was to focus on "soft protection" such as improved lighting in refugee camps, which should hopefully reduce attacks on women.

15. (SBU) Mefford welcomed the Greek ideas, and asked that the GoG forward complete proposals, which USAID would study closely.

Greek Assistance to the Balkans, Present and Future

16. (SBU) Stylianides outlined a number of other ideas for Greek assistance that did not involve USAID. He noted the GoG had been "very active" in Albania, providing 180 million Euro in assistance to date. Under PM Karamanlis, the GoG had developed an action plan for Albania that foresaw cooperation with Greek Orthodox Archbishop Anastasios among others, aimed at building schools in both the Greek-minority areas and in the north of the country. Stylianides was hoping to utilize some of the 550 million Euro Greece had committed to the Balkan Reconstruction Fund (BRF) for the creation of a modern road connecting the towns of Southwest Albania with Greece, which he claimed previous PM Nano had approved in the face of some Albanian governmental opposition. Unfortunately, he went on to say, the original feasibility study, which had been conducted by an Italian firm, would have to be redone.

17. (SBU) Stylianides said the GoG was also working on a feasibility study for the construction of the four-lane "Corridor 10" road from Greece to north Serbia. Current plans foresaw the GoG providing 50 percent of the total \$200 million in funding, the rest of which would be provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB). Stylianides noted the potential to connect the road to Kosovo. He said he had been in close touch with Belgrade on the project and hoped to receive a response by the end of the year.

18. (C) Stylianides said Greek plans in the Balkans also extended to energy. He pointed to the recent signing of the Southeastern Europe Energy Cooperative (SEEC) agreement, which creates a region-wide electricity regulatory authority to be headquartered in Athens. He noted that a major crude oil pipeline already connects Greece with Kosovo, which Hellenic Petroleum hopes to extend to the Pristina airport. The pipeline would send crude oil to Skopje, and then refined petroleum products onwards to Pristina. Stylianides indicated the GoG is already building homes, in cooperation with UNDP, for Serb returnees to Kosovo. The Ambassador put these ideas into the context of the international community's hopes for an equitable and peaceful solution to the status of Kosovo and urged the Deputy Minister to consider how well-timed Greek assistance could be used with the Serbs to sweeten the final deal.

19. (SBU) Stylianides said he was very conscious of how GoG diplomatic actions in the Balkans needed to take into account improving regional investment and trade. The road project in Albania, for instance, had the potential to unlock a significant amount of Albanian-Greek trade. Stylianides was in close touch with the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce on a 2006 conference in Thessaloniki on business in the Balkans.

110. (SBU) The Ambassador thanked Stylianides for his proactive approach to cooperation with USAID and underlined the key role such cooperation will play in the overall U.S.-Greek strategic partnership. He noted the USG welcomes a strong Greek role in the Balkan region and said that, although U.S. and GoG capacities for action differ, our objectives track well. Furthermore, Greece benefits from the partnership in a number of ways -- in the case of USAID's work in Albania, Greece is already profiting from increased Albanian capacity to fight TIP.

Other Mefford Meetings: Hellenic Aid and NGOs

111. (SBU) In addition to his meeting with Stylianides,

Mefford also met with Deputy Director General for Hellenic Aid, Helen Zourbala. She and her staff provided the USAID team with information about the modalities involved in Greece's assistance programs. There is a yearly call for proposals, which is just about to start and should be completed by the end of March. Greek assistance can only be provided to Greek NGOs or to multilateral organizations. Zourbala noted the GoG could fund TACT through ARSIS, for instance.

12. (SBU) Mefford also conducted a round-table discussion with four Greek NGOs involved in combating TIP: the Human Rights Defense Center (KEPAD), ARSIS, STOPNow!, and the European Network of Women (ENOW). The NGO consensus was to welcome the recently-signed MOU with the GoG, while taking a wait-and-see attitude regarding results. The NGO leaders stressed the lack of trust between the GoG and the NGO community, which they said would take time to overcome. They noted the importance of the MOU's implementation of an EU requirement for a month-long "reflection period" for victims of trafficking, which allowed them time to bring their situation to the attention of Greek law enforcement entities without victims in illegal status being subject to immediate arrest and possible deportation. The Greeks also bemoaned the spotty nature of their public awareness campaigns, citing lack of funding. Dina Vardaramatou, President of STOPNow! said that the Saatchi and Saatchi advertising agency had produced two free informational TV spots on TIP (prior to the Olympics) which had been very well-received by the Greek public. Her organization hesitated asking Saatchi and Saatchi to give more of their time, and does not have enough money to fund a spot on their own. Other participants in the discussion were Tenia Kyriaki, Legal Advisor to KEPAD, Niki Roubani, President of ENOW, and Katerina Poutou, Athens Representative of ARSIS.

Comment

13. (SBU) Stylianides literally put his money where his mouth is through his significant funding commitment to the TACT project. Post will follow up with the GoG and with our colleagues at Embassy Albania to make certain the GoG commitment gets quickly translated into action.
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